

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 018337

FOLLOWING REPEAT SAN SALVADOR 0307 ACTION SECSTATE INFO AMEMBASSY'S
GUATEMALA MANAGUA SAN JOSE TEGUCIGALPA DIA USCINCSO

QUOTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 0307

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SHUM, ES, OAS

SUBJECT: INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION GROUP CON-
CLUDES VISIT TO EL SALVADOR

1. A WORKING GROUP FROM THE INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COM-
MISSION (IAHRC) WAS IN SAN SALVADOR DURING JANUARY 9-18.
THREE MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION ALONG WITH SUPPORT PERSONNEL
WORKING LONG HOURS TO CARRY OUT A SERIOUS AND WELL-PUBLICIZED
INVESTIGATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN EL SALVADOR.

2. MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION MET WITH PRESIDENT ROMERO, NUMEROUS
GOES OFFICIALS AND A WIDE RANGE OF INTERESTED PARTIES AND PET-
ITIONERS. ON JANUARY 17, APPORXIMATELY 400 DEMONSTRATORS
GATHERED OUTSIDE THE CAMINO REAL HOTEL (WHERE THE COMMISSION WAS
LODGED) TO DENOUNCE THE GOVERNMENT AND THE GENERAL STATE OF HUMAN,
CIVIL, POLITICAL, AND LABOR RIGHTS. THE DEMONSTRATION WAS
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AN ORDERLY ONE AND POLICE ON THE SCHED LIMITED THEMSELVES TO
DIRECTING TRAFFIC AROUND THE FRINGES. ON JANUARY 18, APPROX-
IMATELY FIFTY PERSONS IDENTIFYING THEMSELVES AS PARETNS AND
RELATIVES OF DISAPPEARED PERSONS AND ALLEGED POLITICAL PRISONERS
STAGED A MISPLACED SIT-IN AT THE LOCAL OFFICES OF THE OAS
TO DEMAND THAT THE IAHRC GROUP ISSUE SOME IMMEDIATE PRONOUNCE-
MENT ON THE STATUS OF THEIR LOVED ONES. DURING THE VISIT OF THE

IAHRC A GROUP OF WIDOWS AND FAMILY MEMBERS OF SECURITY PERSONNEL LOST IN TERRORIST ACTIONS ALSO SOUGHT TO SEE THE IAHRC GROUP TO PROTEST THE DENIAL OF THEIR "HUMAN RIGHTS" BY TERRORISTS BUT WERE DENIED AUDIENCE ON THE BASIS OF LACK OF PERTINENCE TO THE IAHRC MISSION. THE GROUP'S PLEAS WERE CARRIED EXTENSIVELY IN THE LOCAL PRESS. BY NOW, IIBTHREE COMMISSION MEMBERS HAVE DEPARTED FROM EL SALVADOR AND SUPPORT PERSONNEL ARE IN THE PROCESS OF CLOSING DOWN THE TEMPORARY OFFICE.

3. DURING THE VISIT, PRESIDENT ROMERO AND OTHER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAVE GENERALLY LAUDED THE COURTEOUS AND PROFESSIONAL MANNER IN WHICH THE IAHRC GROUP HAS GONE ABOUT ITS TASK, AND THE PRESIDENT PUBLICLY EXPRESSED HIS CONFIDENCE THAT THE COMMISSION WOULD JUDGE THE SITUATION IN EL SALVADOR WITH COMPLETE IMPARTIALITY.

4. THE JANUARY 19 PRESS QUOTES DR. EDMUNDO VARGAS CARRENO, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE VISITING IAHRC GROUP, AS SAYING THAT MEMBERS OF THE GROUP WILL CARRY AWAY WITH THEM AN OBJECTIVE VIEW OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN EL SALVADOR. THE COMMISSION, HE SAID, TRIED TO ACT WITH HONESTY, SINCERITY, OBJECTIVITY AND IMPARTIALITY. HE EXPLAINED THAT THE STAFF WOULD NOW PREPARE A DRAFT OUTLINE OF THE REPORT TO BE SUBMITTED BY THE THREE VISITING MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION TO THE OVERALL IAHRC. THE FULL BODY WILL PROVIDE GUIDANCE AS TO HOW THE FINAL REPORT IS TO BE PREPARED. ONCE IT IS PREPARED, THE REPORT WILL BE CONFIDENTIAL

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SUBMITTED TO THE GOVERNMENT OF EL SALVADOR FOR ITS CONSIDERATION AND COMMENT. FINALLY, IN LIGHT OF THE LATTER, THE DEFINITIVE REPORT WILL BE PREPARED AND SUBMITTED TO THE OAS. THE OVERALL PROCESS, HE ESTIMATED, COULD TAKE 3 TO 5 MONTHS.

5. AT THE TIME OF ITS DEPARTURE, THE IAHRC GROUP ISSUED A PRESS RELEASE STATING THAT IT HAD COMPLETED ITS TASK AND POINTING OUT THAT WHILE HERE IT HAD MET WITH THE PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT OF EL SALVADOR, THE CONGRESS, SUPREME COURT, VARIOUS CABINET MINISTERS, REPRESENTATIVES OF RELIGIOUS, POLITICAL, PROFESSIONAL, BUSINESS AND LABOR ORGANIZATIONS, WITH MEMBERS OF THE NEWS MEDIA, WITH FAMILY MEMBERS OF PERSONS SUPPOSEDLY DISAPPEARED OR DETAINED AS POLITICAL PRISONERS, AND HAD VISITED PRINCIPAL JAIL CENTERS, BOTH IN THE CAPITAL CITY AND IN THE INTERIOR. THE RELEASE WENT ON TO POINT OUT THAT THE VISITING GROUP CANNOT MAKE ANY PRELIMINARY STATEMENTS ABOUT THE VISIT UNTIL IT HAS SUBMITTED ITS REPORT TO THE FULL IAHRC. IN CONCLUSION, THE PRESS RELEASE SAID, "THE COMMISSION WISHES TO STATE THAT THE PERSONS AND INSTITUTIONS WHICH PROVIDED INFORMATION ARE PROTECTED BY THE COMMITMENT MADE BY THE GOVERNMENT THAT IT WILL UNDERTAKE NO MEASURE AGAINST THEM FOR THE FACT OF THEIR HAVING COLLABORATED WITH THE COMMISSION."

6. DURING THE PRESENCE HERE OF THE IAHRG WORKING GROUP,
THE EMBASSY HAS HAD NO OFFICIAL CONTACT WITH IT. WE DID NOT WISH
TO "CONTAMINATE" ITS INTERNATIONAL CHARACTER NOR GIVE RISE TO
ANY CHARGES THAT THE IAHRG GROUP WAS IN FACT AN INSTRUMENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

7. DISCREET SOUNDINGS, HOWEVER, SUGGEST TO US THAT THE IAHRG
FINDINGS WILL BE UNPALATABLE TO THE GOVERNMENT OF EL SALVADOR.
EVEN MAKING ALLOWANCES FOR ALLEGATIONS TOTALLY IMPOSSIBLE OF
VERIFICATION AND FOR THE RAMPANT EXAGGERATION WHICH IS SO
MUCH A FACT OF LOCAL LIFE HERE, SOME PERSONNEL OF THE IAHRG GROUP
ARE KNOWN TO FEEL THAT A SIGNIFICANT BODY OF ADVERSE DATA HAS
BEEN TURNED UP. EVEN THOUGH THE INTERNAL DYNAMICS OF THE IAHRG
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ARE LIKELY TO MUTE THE END PRODUCT, IT IS BELIEVED THAT
THE FINAL REPORT WILL INDICATE THE OPPORTUNITY AND THE NEED
FOR CORRECTIVE ACTION BY THE GOES IN TERMS OF ITS HUMAN
RIGHTS PRACTICES.
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